



Commencement 2025

My sincere congratulations to our graduates, to their families and friends. Thank you to the faculty and staff for another academic year. Well done! We ALL celebrate the graduation of our students.

Welcome, everyone, to Caldwell University, your university. Students, this has been your academic home for the past several years...and soon, it will be your alma mater for the rest of your lives.

Your university . . . the embodiment of Mother Joseph's dream for a Catholic and Dominican college, one of the best Catholic universities in our part of the world. Founded in 1939 by Mother Joseph Dunn and made real by generations of Sister-teachers of the Dominican order. May God continue to bless our Sisters! Students came here to learn, transform themselves into educated people, and make a difference upon graduation.

It is our mission as a Catholic and Dominican University to:

- Promote intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic growth
- Welcome all cultures and faith traditions.
- Transform students' lives by preparing them through liberal arts and professional studies.

Every graduate of the Class of 2025 is expected to follow the lead of the tens of thousands of Caldwell alumni who preceded you by not only doing well, but also by doing good, as well as remaining faithful to the enduring values you learned here: Respect, Integrity, Community, and Excellence. These are not just words for Caldwell University or for you as graduates.

We also want you to know how proud we are of you. We know well what you have accomplished, what you contributed, and what you sacrificed.

I hope I can help you build memories in your mind today!

This is a memorable day; however, memories take work to embed in our minds, and we tend not to pay attention in the moment.

Memories #1 - We get one shot to create a memory

Bob Dylan once said “Take care of all your memories. For you cannot relive them.”

I remember the day I graduated from my doctoral program at Michigan State like it was yesterday, but it was more than thirty years ago.

My father, Fortunato, my closest Aunt, Joan, and Uncle Marty attended, as did one of my brothers, Glenn.

My dad, aunt, and uncle have all since passed away . . . so the memories are all the more dear to me.

We went out that day for burgers and beers.

It was a little local dive bar that my friends and I went to . . . nothing fancy . . . actually kind of dirty and seedy.

The beers were inexpensive (I think one dollar), and the burgers were the best I have had anywhere.

We had fun and laughed our heads off about their travels from Philadelphia to Michigan (the plane ride was turbulent, and they lost their luggage).

We enjoyed the pure joy of being together—the joy of accomplishment for our family of immigrants to have a “doctor” in the family.

I can still see their faces with the joy of that day!

While Dylan was right that I cannot relive that day, he was also wrong because the memories of it are firmly and forever with me not as a prideful time for me at all . . . but as a time of absolute joy in my family.

I wish you that kind of joy today and enduring positive memories!

Memories #2- If one is memorable, others are impacted

Rosa Parks once said, "Memories of our lives, works and deeds will continue in others.”

She stood where she sat, literally, for good and for her rights . . . and the rights of many.

Her memories were, I am sure, forged in her experiences. And she is remembered.

So too should your memories of your times and work at Caldwell University be forged.

Faculty and staff will continue, rightly so, in your memories.

The faculty I experienced as a student are immortal in my mind and my work.

Honor them and all your great work at the University by having amazingly successful lives,

professionally and personally.

Carry forward what you have learned to others, your children, colleagues, and your communities!

You can achieve immortality through your good works and positive deeds!

We should all aspire to that goal!

Memories #3 - Remember and focus on looking forward

Jeremy Irons suggests that memories take us back and ground us, and dreams take us forward.

Your memories of your experiences here will take you back to what you learned and experienced, and that diligent work that got you to where you are today.

And yet, you and I cannot be stuck in the past, reliving memories, no matter how pleasant that is.

We need to look forward.

You need to look forward... today of all days.

You need to dream about your future.

Your success.

In my 30+ years as a faculty member and administrator in higher education and my supporting 10s of thousands of graduates at 76 separate commencements (and now 77), just a few bits of ending knowledge

1. Invest in your long-term learning . . . Read every day. Just as your body needs exercise, your brain needs exercise, and there is nothing like reading to help.
2. Go out of your way to be kind to others. Do not remember the difficult people or challenging situations you have encountered or will. Learn to move on quickly from these situations.
3. Be happy. What else would you want to be?
Focus on what maximizes your happiness. Not to the detriment of others, but on what you enjoy.

Congratulations again, well done, we are so proud of you!

May God continue to bless you, Always!

Closing Remarks

On behalf of the Caldwell University community, I wish you our hearty congratulations. Your achievement today was made possible in part by the time, talent, and treasure of our Board of Trustees and many other alumni and friends. Now, let us take a moment to thank those who helped get you here; your faculty and the staff who challenged you and supported you.

FACULTY PLEASE STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED

Your parents and spouses, family and friends. Without them we wouldn't be here.

GRADUATES PLEASE STAND AND RECOGNIZE YOUR GUESTS

And one more expression of thanks, please – for all those staff who worked so hard for months—mostly behind the scenes—to arrange today's wonderful ceremony for you. Graduates, please join me in thanking them all.

One last thing . . . At my first commencement as a university president 7 years ago... I created a closing action that was intended to do something extra and special to honor graduates as you will always and forever be students I have had the honor to confer degrees upon. In this action, I want to stop your university time, marking the end of a phase in your life with your graduation. With this symbolic demonstration I hope I can impress upon you that this moment marks a new beginning in your life as you are no longer on University time.

Of course you can come back for another degree!

It's now your time and your turn . . . go for it! Congratulations again. May God bless you always and we wish you the very best of luck.